

March 2, 2021

RE: Supporting HB 2528

Chair Prusak, Vice Chair Hayden, Vice Chair Salinas, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kari Douglass and I am a Dental Health Aide Therapist working under Pilot Project#100 for the Native American Rehabilitation Association (NARA) Dental Clinic in Portland, OR. In 2017, I moved to Alaska for two years to complete the Alaska Dental Therapy Educational Program. I chose to leave my home and do this program because I knew it would bring opportunity to my community; opportunity for affordable access to dental care which is missing from our community, and opportunity for my community members and our youth to show them that they too, can give back to their community and have a full, meaningful life. I have worked in this midlevel provider position for just over a year. I have loved every single day of my job because I get to help those that might have otherwise waited until it was too late to save a tooth. I have helped families learn to care for their children's teeth. I have been able to show compassion and empathy with my patients because I have the time to do so--time to really build that relationship that is going to lead to changed behavior, the true path to caries prevention.

I can't wait for this pilot phase to transition to state licensure because I'll spend more time with patients and helping improve my community's oral health and less time with administrative tasks.

I know first-hand that dental therapists deliver high-quality care. This has been confirmed time and time again. In August 2020, the dental therapy education program where I was trained was accredited by the American Dental Association's Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), the governing body that accredits all U.S. education programs for dentists and dental hygienists. The newly accredited Alaska Dental Therapy Education Program offers a curriculum that supports our goals of creating innovative, high-quality, community-based health care right here in our own state.

I strongly urge you to support HB 2528 that will give safe, quality access to dental care for our community.

Sincerely,

Kari Douglass, Dental Health Aide Therapist